

Unit 3 Writing: The Art of Information Writing

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 1**
Length: **4-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will create an informational writing piece based on a topic of expertise. Students will write daily and conference with their teacher/peer as needed. To assist students in reaching the goals for this unit, teachers will guide them through the following steps:

- Immersing students to study the purpose, structure, and characteristics of information writing while generating possible writing ideas
- Choosing topics by considering focused areas of expertise
- Organizing information and writing chapters
- Elaborating to increase writing volume and to add a variety of information
- Revising and editing to prepare for publishing

Through mentor text, students will be immersed in information text type in order to recognize text features and structures such as: table of contents, chapter headings, subtopics, and glossaries. It is suggested that students form writing partnerships with the goal of collaborating and supporting each other throughout the writing process. Grammar and conventions mini lessons will be taught throughout this unit.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revision Date: June 2022

Pacing Guide

Please refer to [this Language Arts Reading and Writing Workshop Pacing Guide for grade 3](#). Sentence Study is paced and aligned within the Syntax, Style, Grammar and Conventions section. Please refer to [this](#)

[folder](#) for the scope and sequence as well as specific lessons and materials.

A sample K-5 Literacy Schedule Across a Week is accessible in instructional materials section of the [Grades K-5 folder](#).

Standards

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources.

LA.W.3.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
LA.W.3.4	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.3.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
LA.W.3.6	With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
LA.W.3.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self-correction and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.SL.3.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.L.3.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.3.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.3.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

WRK.9.2.5.CAP.1	Evaluate personal likes and dislikes and identify careers that might be suited to personal likes.
TECH.9.4.5.CI.3	Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals with diverse perspectives to expand one's thinking about a topic of curiosity (e.g., 8.2.5.ED.2, 1.5.5.CR1a).
TECH.9.4.5.IML.2	Create a visual representation to organize information about a problem or issue (e.g., 4.MD.B.4, 8.1.5.DA.3).
TECH.9.4.5.IML.3	<p>Represent the same data in multiple visual formats in order to tell a story about the data.</p> <p>Different types of jobs require different knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Collaboration with individuals with diverse perspectives can result in new ways of thinking and/or innovative solutions.</p> <p>Digital tools can be used to modify and display data in various ways that can be organized to communicate ideas.</p> <p>An individual's passions, aptitude and skills can affect his/her employment and earning potential.</p>

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

- How do writers use mentor texts to study characteristics of information writing and generate ideas?
 - How do information writers try on topics and then revise those topics, with an eye toward greater focus?
 - How do writers plan and organize chapters prior to drafting?
 - How do writers draft information books, incorporating all we know about a topic?
 - How do writers elaborate to increase the volume of what they're writing?
 - How do information writers edit information books and then prepare them for publication?
 - How do writers determine their audience and write with them in mind?
 - How do text features enhance information writing?
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- Writers write for different purposes.
 - Information writers write to inform others about what they know.
 - Information writers write with their audience in mind.
 - Information writers use domain-specific vocabulary.
 - Writers revise and edit their pieces.

Students Will Know/Students Will be Skilled At...

Students will know:

- Writers develop strategies to write effectively about an area in which they have an expertise.
- Writers write with independence.
- Writers write with fluency, stamina, and speed.
- Writers write introductions, logically organize information, and include text features that help their readers.

- Writers elaborate their topics, including facts, definitions, and other important details.
- Writers use linking words and phrases to connect ideas within categories of information.
- Writers include a satisfying conclusion.
- Writers plan, revise, and edit their writing.

Students will be skilled at:

- Organizing their information as they write.
- Using mentor texts to learn more about elaboration.
- Using transitional strategies and phrases.
- Balancing interesting facts.
- Creating introductions using strategies learned from mentor texts.
- Reviewing their information writing using a checklist.
- Using revision strategies to clear up confusion in their work.
- Using text features to enhance their information writing.
- Using resources to check their information for accuracy.
- Editing, focusing on paragraphing.
- Utilizing nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in their writing.
- Utilizing abstract nouns (i.g. childhood, love, freedom).
- Producing simple, compound, and complex sentences (i.g series/list sentences and sentences with conjunctions).
- Demonstrating command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative:

- Answer essential questions

- Teacher observations/conferencing notes
- Turn and talks
- Partnerships rehearsing their writing
- Peer Conferences
- Writer's Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites)
- Teacher checklists using mini-lessons for measurable skills
- Writing Conferences: Individual and small group
- Writing Partnership work and discussions
- Writing folders with student work
- Writing pieces to note the growth need of the writer
- Observations
- Listening in on partnership discussion of writing piece
- Drafts online (Google Docs)

Summative, including Alternative Assessments:

- Students should have 1-2 final pieces to score not including the post assessment.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- During publishing, students read their piece to assess oral speaking and reading skills
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Learning Progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Rubrics and Student Samples
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- Standards should be addressed as reported on the Standards-Based Report Card

Benchmark:

- Benchmark writing assessments: opinion, narrative, and informational, scored using rubrics, district-created and provided.
- Located in the shared Grades K-8 Language Arts folder on the Google Drive, reported three times per year

Learning Plan

Our upper elementary writing instruction follows a balanced literacy approach including a number of strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop. These include mini-lessons, shared writing, independent writing, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, partnerships and/or writing clubs. Writing Workshop emphasizes immersion, independence, and choice. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where children share their writing with others in the school community.

Lessons should follow the mini-lesson format:

- Teaching point(s) for each lesson
- Connection: Connects new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach/Modeling: Uses ‘think alouds’ when modeling what you expect students to do
- Guided Practice/Active Engagement: Guides students through practice of the teaching point
- Link to Independent Practice: Helps writers understand the purpose for the writing they are about to do and the skills/craft they will be practicing/applying independently as good writers
- Independent Writing/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent writing while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point.

The architecture of a writing conference includes:

- Research
- Decide
- Teach and Coach with guided practice
- Link

Grammar/Conventions: These skills are embedded in the unit. Here is a list of concepts in this unit. NOTE: Grammar should be taught organically within the context of writing at teacher discretion.

- Explain function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their general functions.
- Use abstract nouns
- Use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions
- Produce simple and compound sentences
- Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Comparatives and Superlatives

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

Suggested Teaching Points/Lessons: Organizing Information

Writers immerse themselves in the study of informational texts.

- Students should be given time to read informational texts like a reader – read, enjoy, and discuss. Then, pieces will be reread in part or whole through “a writer’s eyes.” Selections will be reread to notice, name, and discuss how and why an author structured the text in a particular way or selected specific words.
- These selections should be a combination of published text, teacher authored work, and/or student

authored work.

- Reading like a writer means to read with a sense of possibility – What did this author do that I could try? Students can use mentor texts as resources for when they write.
- Mark up discoveries of information text. Create an anchor chart: "Characteristics of an Effective Information Book".

Possible things to discover:

Lead/Introduction

How the author hooks the reader

Where the author names the topic/possible subtopics

Body

Transition words or phrases

Topic sentence of the paragraph that states the subtopic

Information about subtopic: facts, definitions, details

“Expert” words that teach readers about the subject

Text features that provide information in a way to interest readers (e.g. drawings, captions, diagrams, charts, headings and subheadings, bold words, definition boxes, etc.)

Ending /Conclusion

Restates topic

Provides additional information: draws conclusions, asks questions, suggests ways readers might respond, suggests a follow up action, provides a final insight, offers writer’s thoughts and feelings.

Writers grow potential topic ideas by writing long and exploring what they know.

- Students generate possible writing ideas.
- Students write about a topic of information that especially matters to them, recording everything that comes to mind..
- Teacher may model writing long on a full notebook page. Teacher may also model with a topic he/she cannot write long about.

Writers choose smaller topics.

- In this lesson, the goal would be to focus on a smaller topic. Instead of writing “All About Third Grade Specials”, students are encouraged to write about just one special such as Art, Gym, or Music or an even narrower topic such as “Art Projects” or “Holiday Music”.

- Help them to upgrade their topic choice by asking students to be more specific and narrow their focus. Share student work that exemplifies the lesson.

Writers use planning tools to develop subtopics.

- Teacher models a way to expand on a topic by developing subtopics.
- Information writers list out the expert topics that they know a lot about and include subtopics for each one by first using their hand as a graphic organizer. Students then try out a planning tool such as boxes and bullets and a table of contents to help with their overall structure.
- Subtopics may also be called ‘chapters’ as these subtopics will eventually become chapters of a book.
- Students generate topics and select a few final subtopics they wish to include in an information piece in an appropriate format (i.e. essay, book, slideshow presentation).

Writers give mini-lectures to rehearse their writing.

- Teacher models how to ‘teach’ others about a topic one is passionate about.
 - Name the topic
 - List subtopics across your fingers
 - Say more about several subtopics
- Students choose a topic (babysitting, baseball, having a pet, etc.) Students teach their partners while the teacher listens to students and coaches as needed.
- “Teaching Moves that Information Writers Should Borrow” CHART (pg. 10 *The Art of Information Writing*)

Information writers try different organizational structures while making a plan for what to write in each chapter.

- Students write a table of contents for their topic, thinking about a logical order of subtopics.
- “Strong Table of Contents” CHART (pg. 20 *The Art of Information Writing*). Use the National Geographic book *Deadliest Animals* as an example.
- Information writers often make plans for how to organize their information writing. Writers make one plan, then they think about a different possible plan, and they keep doing this over and over. Each plan includes a different way to divide a topic into parts.
- Partners discuss ways to organize their topic.
- Teacher can introduce and model different types of structures (see pgs. 24-27 in *The Art of Information Writing* for examples):
 - "Boxes and bullets
 - Cause and effect

- Pros and cons
- Compare and contrast
- Encourage students to try out each structure with their topics..

Prepare students for drafting by encouraging them to continue to list/write information about their topics.

Suggested Teaching Points/Lessons: Reaching to Write Well

Writers form paragraphs with the big ideas first and then the smaller details.

- Students may move out of their notebooks and onto drafting paper.
- Review that paragraphs may be structured with a topic sentence and supporting details that explain more about the topic sentence. Some paragraphs may also have a concluding statement.
- If students know a lot, they may even decide to write multiple paragraphs.

Writers push themselves to write more by using elaboration.

Writers know that information writing is called this for a reason. The book they are creating is like a brick wall, only the bricks are information. We write information books by laying those pieces of information together during the drafting part of the writing process.

- Writers are taught to elaborate with a partner sentence. Students ask themselves: Can I say more about this?
- Partner sentences can include observations, new information, a specific image, or a comparison that connects the information to something the reader knows.
- Students will listen to and study brief parts of texts that include different types of information such as topic specific vocabulary, numbers, names, and examples, as ways to make their writing more detailed.
- “Types of Information Writers Include” CHART (pg. 34 *The Art of Information Writing*)
- Students spend the working period adding to their information books, focusing on writing a lot, not perfection. Students will use their table of contents to stay focused and keep their plan in mind.

Writers use text features to support each page of their writing.

Information writers know that the table of contents applies also to the work of organizing any chapter. Writers also revisit mentor texts, taking notes of different ways information can be taught and with a variety of text features.

- Students will revisit the “Strong Table of Contents” CHART (pg. 20 *The Art of Information Writing*) to

use as a guide for organizing the information within each chapter.

- “Organizing an Informational Text” CHART (pg. 38 *The Art of Information Writing*) will help students decide on a structure for each chapter.
- Information writers think “What text feature will best help my readers understand this information?” They think about what the text is mainly about, and that helps them decide what should be popped out or highlighted.
- “Some Common Text Features and Their Purposes” CHART (pg. 107 *The Art of Information Writing*)
- Use students’ work to engage students in thinking about text features.
- Students can and should study mentor texts for possible text features.

Writers use transition words/phrases to link pieces of information together and to make connections within and across chapters.

In this session, you'll teach children how to connect the information in their chapters using different transitional strategies and phrases. You'll suggest they look to a mentor text for ideas about how best to transition in their own informational books.

- A transition list with words and phrases should be provided to students.
- Students are encouraged to reread chapters to make sure it's a logical order and then insert transition words to link information together.
- Proper punctuation is necessary when using transition words.

Writers write an introduction that hooks the reader.

- The job of an introduction is to hook the reader and introduce the topic.
- Some ways to introduce a topic are to begin with a short story, a question, a fact/statistic or a description.

Writers conclude with a summary of important information.

- A conclusion should summarize what was learned and why the reader should care about the topic.
- Use mentor texts to look at possible conclusions.

Suggested Teaching Points/Lessons: Moving Toward Publication, Moving Toward Readers

Writers use an information writing checklist to set goals for their writing.

Information writers stop before they are completely done with their pieces to take stock. They reread what they've done so far and think about any guidelines, checklists, or mentor texts, asking, "What's working already?" and "What do I still want to do to make this as strong as possible?"

- Students should be introduced to an "Information Writing Checklist" to monitor progress and set goals.
- Teachers model how to use the third-fourth grade checklist to review their information piece (example pg. 92-93 *The Art of Information Writing* or student checklist pg. 135 *Writing Pathways*).
- Teachers set up students to review their work, starring goals and checking for growth.

Writers revise and edit their writing carefully.

Writers know that eventually other people will read their writing, so writers prepare for that by rereading their pieces very carefully, looking for places that are confusing or underdeveloped. Writers then revise to make sure that the writing will reach readers.

- Students check for three basic parts of informational writing: introduction/lead, body, and ending/conclusion.
- Teachers model how to add or modify any part that is missing or needs work.
- An editing checklist, "Illustrated Information Checklist", can be found in the Language Arts Curriculum Third Grade Folder.
- Convention instruction can be taught via mini-lessons for the whole class or in small groups for students needing additional instruction.

Writers celebrate their work.

At this time, students will move on to publishing. A celebration of the writing will follow before students begin their next piece of work.

SUGGESTED TEACHING POINTS/LESSONS: TRANSFERRING LEARNING FROM LONG PROJECTS TO SHORT ONES

Writers transfer learning from long projects to short ones.

When writers move on to other subject areas, they carry those skills with them when they become scientists, anthropologists, and mathematicians. Specifically, writers make sure they use what they know about planning well-organized information texts, whether they are writing a book in a writing workshop or writing an article in the social studies classroom.

- Use boxes and bullets or demonstrate another way to structure a text on a classroom topic (math topic, science, social studies, etc.) Remind students of the different structures of nonfiction texts that they could use (pg. 38 *The Art of Information Writing*).

- Students will think of a topic to explore further.
- Students will briefly plan ways to chunk their topic into parts.
- Students will write a draft of their information piece, reviewing what they've learned throughout the unit and applying those skills now.
- Information writers assess their own writing to see what works and what doesn't work. One way to do this is by thinking "Did I do what I set out to do?" They reread to see whether the draft matches the plan for it and if it doesn't, they decide whether the plan it does follow works or whether the piece needs to be rewritten.
- Students will reread their piece, referring to charts and previously written pieces to assess their writing. Stress that students have a plethora of strategies for revising informational texts.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Materials used for grammar and convention study include the following: *Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers into the Conventions of Language* by Jeff Anderson.

Instructional Materials

Possible Read alouds and Mentor Texts:

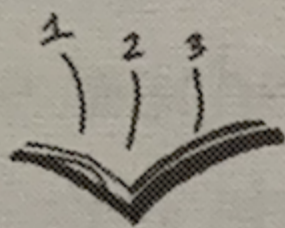
- DK Readers
- Seymour Simon books
- Time For Kids
- Ranger Rick magazine
- National Geographic For Kids
- Scholastic News
- Expository Nonfiction Books from *The Reading Minilessons Book* (Fountas and Pinnell)
- Use Writing Pathways book for performance assessments, learning progressions, student checklists, rubrics, and leveled writing examples.
- See If...Then...Curriculum Grade 3 for specific ideas for small group or individual conferring scenarios

Anchor Charts

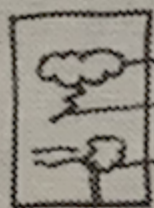
Teaching moves that Information Writers should borrow



Explain what the **whole book** will be about.



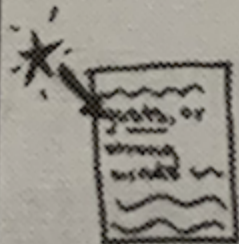
Tell a bit about the **big** you'll teach (kind of like a table



Try to say at least a few **Sentences** about each part



Talk like an **expert**



Use **fancy words** and **exp** what they mean.



Use your book to help you

Teacher Resources

- Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Lucy Calkins with Colleagues from the Reading and Writing Project, Grade 3 Heinemann, 2013.
- Resources for Teaching Writing CD, Grade 3, Heinemann, 2013.
- *The Writing Strategies Book*, Jennifer Serravallo
- *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward*, Patty McGee
- *Patterns of Power*, Jeff Anderson
- *Mechanically Inclined*, Jeff Anderson
- The Story of My Thinking, Gretchen Bernabei
- [Trail of Breadcrumbs](#) Website
- [Two Writing Teachers](#) Blog
- *Assessing Writers*, Carl Anderson
- Cranford Public School Grades K-8 Google Folder for instructional materials
- [Crosswalk \(suggested IRA titles and Mini Lesson numbers\)](#)

Suggested Strategies for Modifications and Accommodations

[Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here](#) for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

The structure of writing workshop is designed to differentiate and address specific goals and learning for each reader:

- The unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.
- The teacher will assign, assess and modify if necessary to address the specific needs of the learner.
- Students have individualized choice of topics within each unit.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

Possible accommodations during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to complete a task or project
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management

- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; eliminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines
- Access speech to text function on computer

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Refer to the Strategies for Striving Students in the K-8 folder for specific appropriate interventions.
- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plans.
- Refer to the Pathways to Intervention documents in the K-5 folder for specific appropriate interventions.
- Consult with Cranford Problem Solving Team (CPST), as needed.